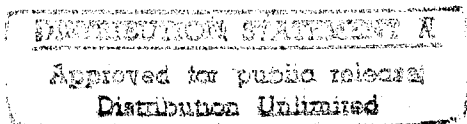(Unclassified Paper)

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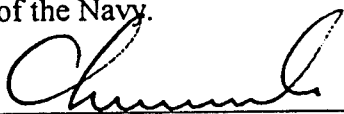NATO COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE

by

CHRISTOPHER A. MELHUISH
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.
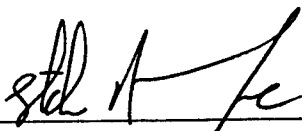

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Signature: _____

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Abstract of

THE NATO COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE

One operational NATO initiative that seeks to address the issue of how the Alliance will conduct out-of-area (OOA) operations in conjunction with non-Alliance members is the NATO Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept. As many of the building blocks for the CJTF concept may be attributed to the U.S. experience in conducting JTF operations over the past decade, this paper compares U.S. JTF key lessons learned with the NATO CJTF concept under development. A brief discussion of U.S. JTF characteristics and lessons learned is followed by an analysis of NATO's requirements for conducting OOA military operations. An examination of the adequacy of the CJTF concept as currently outlined by the Major NATO Commanders (MNC) results in three principal conclusions regarding the CJTF concept and implications for future CJTF commanders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARRC	-	Allied Rapid Reaction Corps
CIS	-	Command and Information System
CJTF	-	Combined Joint Task Force
JMCIS	-	Joint Maritime Command Information System
JTF	-	Joint Task Force
MC	-	Military Committee
MNC	-	Major NATO Commander
NACCIS	-	North Atlantic Command and Control System
WEU	-	Western European Union

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

NATO's Challenge

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is faced with one of the most important

challenges in its forty-five year history. Long the "glue" that held the Alliance together, the

concept of collective self-defense has been transformed by the demise of the Warsaw Pact threat.

The question of how the Alliance will tackle "new world" challenges that are not strictly

self-defense issues is a priority for the NATO Military Committee (MC). NATO cannot afford

to treat security organizations such as the Partnership for Peace, Conference on Security and

Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Western European Union (WEU) as separable from

NATO's overall strategic vision: moreover, these security initiatives must be addressed at the

operational and tactical levels, and not left at the strategic-political level. In light of NATO's

apparent willingness to now tackle non-Article V issues (i.e., situations that fall outside the strict

definition of the Alliance's self-defense pact contained in Article V of the 1949 North Atlantic

Treaty), NATO operational commanders must deal with situations not fully addressed by NATO

doctrine that also require tactical and operational solutions. Additionally, NATO member states

are experiencing significant force reductions: downsizing military structures may leave NATO

commanders with diminished means to execute expanding missions. There is a clear need to

solve what might be a potential ends-means mismatch at the operational level.

One operational NATO initiative which addresses the issue of out-of-area (OOA) and non-NATO force integration the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept. This concept, approved by NATO's heads of state in January 1994, offers a possible solution to the question of how NATO will take on OOA involvement as well as the challenges of integrating multilateral operations (i.e., participation of non-NATO countries), and crisis management.[1] Some of the building blocks for the NATO CJTF concept can probably be derived from U.S. experience gained in conducting JTF operations, and it might be useful, therefore, to analyze the CJTF concept in this light. Of particular interest is the development of the Combined Joint Task Force Headquarters (CJTF HQ) concept that seeks to provide a flexible and mobile command and control (C2) capability which is not adequately provided by the existing immediate and rapid reaction forces.[2]

The aim of this paper is to examine the NATO CJTF concept currently under development in comparison with the U.S. experience in conducting JTF operations. The scope of research will be limited to the maritime perspective of the NATO CJTF concept, partly to bound the discussion more narrowly and also to draw conclusions with regard to operational level concerns for the CJTF commander. Conclusions will be presented that may have implications for future CJTF commanders.

CHAPTER II

THE NATO CJTF

U.S. Joint Task Force Concept

A JTF is not a new concept. While JTFs, as one U.S. admiral put it, are definitely the latest "growth industry,"[3] JTFs have been around in various guises and conducted by other countries for quite some time. What is innovative and worthy of examination, however, is how the United States has overhauled JTF doctrine over the last ten years--particularly in response to the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act, which demonstrably streamlined how the U.S. military responds to and manages crises.

From a U.S. perspective, the value-added of a JTF may be perhaps better understood in terms of the changing security environment, growing emphasis on multilateral crisis response and the need to integrate selected forces. Faced with smaller, short-fuzed, dynamic contingencies, the United States has embraced the JTF concept as an appropriate means of orchestrating operational level responses. Contingencies have spanned the spectrum from humanitarian assistance and non-permissive evacuation operations (NEO), to military interventions (e.g., JUST CAUSE and RESTORE DEMOCRACY). American JTFs have generally displayed the following trademarks: rapid response, flexibility, rapid integration of forces, sustainability and unity of command. Other traits may also apply, but those listed have

been consistent features in the majority of U.S. JTFs since the early 1980s. Contingencies

requiring the use of a JTF structure have, for the most part, been short-fuzed, of short duration

(with a few notable exceptions, such as PROVIDE COMFORT) and marked by specific

objectives. A final point about JTF characteristics is that JTFs operate at the tactical-

operational level, in recognition not only of the complexity of the issues challenging the JTF

commander, but also of the scope of integrating military resources up to, and including,

corps-sized forces.

NATO CJTF Background and Requirements

> ... Today's security environment reinforces the intrinsic value of a Combined
> Task Force--an integrative mechanism that can maximize NATO's collaborative potential
> to act when, where and with whom the alliance chooses. A CJTF can incorporate
> centralized planning within an alliance MNC headquarters, and decentralized execution
> by a deployed task force supported by the appropriate major and principal subordinate
> commands. [4]

Prior to the CJTF concept currently being hammered out, NATO did not have the

doctrinal framework to respond in the same way as a U.S. JTF could. While there have been at

least thirty occasions since 1949 in which the Alliance has been strained by OOA disputes (such

as the drawdown of U.S. forces from NATO during the Vietnam conflict), the first blueprint

showing how NATO might operate outside of its treaty limits ironically might have been

provided by WEU's 1987-89 Persian Gulf Armada maritime operation.[5] In his speech to the

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European Strategy Group in September 1989, WEU Secretary-General Willem Van Eekelen noted that: "The joint endorsement of these operations [Persian Gulf Armada]. . . broke the deadlock in NATO on out-of-area operations."[6] It is perhaps significant that the precedent for NATO's decision makers was established in a maritime environment: an implication for conducting humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations is that conditions for achieving success may be easier due to the unique advantages enjoyed when operating in a maritime environment.

DESERT STORM provided a taste of how violent post-Cold War coalition operations could become, prompting NATO ministers in May 1991 to agree to create a corps-sized NATO Rapid Reaction Force. This NATO initiative was criticized by WEU's President-in-Office Roland Dumas, who stated that "logic would first require we define the political objectives, and then speak of strategy, and lastly, restructure the forces. However it seems that we have chosen to work backwards."[7] A product of NATO's force restructuring was the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) activated in October 1992 and which will be fully operational in 1995. Permanently commanded by a British Lieutenant General, the corps is designed to be rapidly deployable within seven days of receiving orders. This multinational force is designed to conduct operations across a wide spectrum of military operations, from humanitarian assistance to high-intensity conflict.[8] Despite acknowledged shortfalls in strategic lift, long-haul communications and personnel trained in civil affairs, ARRC appears to provide NATO with a

ready-made "standing CJTF" capable of performing OOA missions. Likewise, the highly mobile ARRC HQ element could constitute an on-call CJTF HQ. Why, then, is NATO pursuing a different path in its CJTF concept? WEU's objections to the ARRC may be one reason, however it might also be argued that the ARRC does not provide the requisite "integrative mechanism" that Admiral Miller (former SACLANT) describes.

U.S. JTF Key Lessons Learned

In a study published by the Center for Naval Analyses, Stewart, Fabbri and Siegal identify the following lessons learned from a study of 23 JTF operations since 1983. The authors derive four key lessons learned:[9]

Lesson number one: coordination was a critical element of all operations. It was observed that JTF commanders had to coordinate with forces or agencies outside the JTF chain of command. These were other military forces or non-military organizations. The latter category was further divided into governmental, non-governmental (NGOs) or private volunteer organizations (PVOs), and JTFs commanders had to be able to integrate these disparate organizations within the mission or at least take them into account. Additionally, Stewart, et al., noted that since JTF operations tend to be *sui generis*, incorporating non-military organizations into the overall mission is difficult to plan for in advance because such organizations vary enormously. For example, PVOs and NGOs involved in Operation SEA ANGEL were different

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from those involved in PROVIDE COMFORT.

Coordination becomes critical when trying to establish unity of effort in the operation at hand, especially when the priorities and methodologies may differ significantly. *Peacekeeping Perspectives* notes that "relief officials often seek the widest distribution of resources, while security forces seek the safest possible delivery of these resources. These competing priorities can lead to logistical nightmares if they are not acknowledged and resolved early in the planning stages."[10]

* Lesson number two: there is a lack of doctrine covering humanitarian operations. Another key lesson learned is the lack doctrine addressing humanitarian operations (although the related subjects of peacekeeping and peace enforcement have been incorporated into joint and service doctrines). The authors point out that issues such as the division of responsibility between the J-3 and J-4 in humanitarian operations were noted as common lessons learned from JTF operations. As of February 1995, the United States still does not posses a joint doctrine for foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA)--it remains at the program directive stage. This deficiency probably reflects the low degree of prioritization that humanitarian assistance received by the U.S. military, although it should be noted that the United States has fully recognized humanitarian assistance as a valid mission and has become formally codified in the recent Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) concept.

* Lesson number three: nearly half of the operations studied were conducted

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on extremely short notice. Nearly fifty percent of the cases studied showed the JTF commander and staff had less than 72 hours notice to plan and prepare for execution of military operations that spanned the spectrum from humanitarian assistance to military combat operations. Additionally, many crises were characterized in the initial stages by a marked lack of information--particularly in the area of humanitarian assistance. The study also noted that *ad hoc* joint staffs presented JTF commanders with problems that would not exist with a permanently constituted staff. Goldwater-Nicols, however, has had a positive impact on operational staffs. U.S. JTF commanders are working with staffs schooled in and guided by joint doctrine that make the critical difference in responding to short-fuzed crises.

* Lesson number four: JTF termination in about half the cases involved turning over the operation to another agency, in keeping with the doctrinal guidance for JTFs. The study noted that while termination of JTF operations fell into one of five categories listed, about half of JTF operations entailed handover to another agency. As a matter of operational art, the commander should know what the desired end state should look like as he plans his operation. The U.S. has learned that skillfully crafted mission statements help to focus on end state, handover procedures, and prevention of "mission creep."

CJTF Report Card

With regards to the first lesson learned--coordination--an example of the operational

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difficulty in trying to coordinate maritime operations facing commanders at the tactical-operational level is illustrated by Rear Admiral Blackham, RN, who describes the challenges he had to deal with in the Adriatic. As CTG 612.02 (a Royal Navy task force), Blackham commanded the first carrier battlegroup to arrive in the Adriatic in support of U.K. forces ashore, and his after action report noted four areas of maritime task force coordination (i.e., coordination between Royal Navy, French Navy and U.S. Navy, NATO and WEU assets) that he thought deserved improvement. These were: air coordination, mutual training, refueling assets, and an appropriate command and control (C2) architecture. Blackham's bottom line for maritime multinational control reinforces the value-added of a CJTF integrative structure: "All that was needed to convert these disparate national groups into a true multinational force was an appropriate command and control (C2) architecture--exercising and training on a daily basis was easy and quick to set up and our ability to cooperate formally was limited only by rules of engagement. . . and political directives or even perceptions."[11] While some have argued that NATO's involvement in the Adriatic (i.e., Operation SHARP GUARD) represented its first live operation, and may have raised unrealistic expectations of what the Alliance should have been able to accomplish, it is worth noting that the Adriatic experience actually presents several unique C2 aspects resulting from the convoluted arrangements that allow U.N., WEU, NATO and assorted nations to have a piece of the Balkan pie. In short, the coordination problem noted by Blackham above, does not lend itself to a CJTF "fix" because of C2 characteristics unique to

the Balkan crisis.

The Adriatic experience does exemplify how coalitions take time to organize especially when a C2 nucleus remains ill-defined. A well-defined C2 architecture needs to be in place to answer the question: who's in charge? While Linn states, "Combined Joint Task Forces are manifestations and symbols of . . . coalition efforts,"[12] the emerging reality of coalition warfare is that countries coalesce around nuclei that are efficient, address political concerns, and perhaps most importantly, are successful. The inference is clear: CJTFs should be more than just symbols. The issue of command and control of military forces is deeply political and so intrinsic to coalition operations that it cannot be ignored. Any C2 element, therefore, has to be sufficiently flexible and adaptive to the idiosyncrasies of the participating nations.

The CJTF concept addresses the issue of coordination in an entirely different way from the U.S. approach to JTF operations. What the Major Nato Commanders (MNCs) elected to do was to attack the coordination problem from the top down. The MNCs decided to form standing CJTF headquarters elements (CJTF HQs) to tackle coordination issues at the operational planning level, rather than take on the bigger problem force component coordination.

The Combined Joint Task Force Headquarters Concept, (NATO document,1994) provides the following definition of the CJTF HQ:

> A CJTF HQ is a deployable, multinational, multiservice HQ of variable size, formed to command and control, as authorized combined forces of NATO nations, and possibly non-NATO nations for the purpose of considering peace operations out of area (OOA). A CJTF HQ could also be deployed for WEU led operations.[13]

This definition addresses the principal issue of C2 and coordination at various levels. Furthermore, in its description of the CJTF HQ capabilities, the document iterates that it should be capable of supporting NATO, NATO "plus" or WEU components of a CJTF to include forces up to corps-sized levels for land elements and the equivalent maritime force (i.e., an Expanded Task Force). It would appear, therefore. that the first JTF lesson learned has been incorporated into the MNC's development of the CJTF HQ concept. Furthermore, in articulating the CJTF HQ capabilities, the same document in effect answers the second and third U.S. JTF key lessons learned (i.e., the requirement for humanitarian doctrine and the ability to react on short notice). Specifically, the MNCs state that the CJTF HQ be:[14]

* Capable of operating throughout the spectrum of peace operations (considered by NATO's Military Committee to include: humanitarian assistance, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace enforcement as defined in MC 327).

* Capable of deploying HQ advance elements in less than seven days of receiving orders, with the main body following within fifteen days.

The fourth lesson learned, (JTF termination considerations) is not addressed by the CJTF concept. Bearing in mind how U.S. operational commanders are trained on the requirement to craft mission statements that tackle issues such as prevention of "mission creep" and military operations termination, omission of this critical aspect of JTF planning seems inexplicable.

Observations

In the course of researching the CJTF the following observations were noted as being

relevant to the conclusions of this paper.

* *"Core competencies:"* core competencies, as described by Miller, refer to "those

specific elements that are essential if a nation or alliance is to undertake military action."[15] He

describes these competencies as falling into four key categories:

-- Operational planning

-- Strategic mobility

-- Logistics

-- C4I

The subject of core competencies raises political as well as military questions since

competency implies measurement against a standard. How the standards are set and judged falls

outside the operational commander's realm, of course. While it is clear that the United States

has demonstrated all of the core competencies listed above, it is difficult to make the make the

same assertion for other nations. If the United States is not included, even NATO is weak in

some of the core competencies listed above, particularly in the areas of strategic lift, long-haul

communications and C4I. In his article "Seapower Conference Examines Next Decade," Wells

states, "The Combined Joint Task Force concept is being fleshed out. . .although serious

limitations will need to be overcome in the critical areas of C3I, logistics and common procedures and tactics."[16]

SACLANT has taken an important initiative in closing the C3I gap with its introduction of the North Atlantic Command and Control Information System (NACCIS). Derived from, and fully compatible with the U.S. Navy's Joint Maritime Command Information System (JMCIS), NACCIS will be available to future commanders of CJTFs and become the "key instruments of post-Cold War multinational crisis management doctrine."[17]

* *Maritime environment advantage:* anecdotally, the contrast between multinational operations in a maritime environment compared with land-based ones may be significant in successfully developing multinational cooperation. The maritime setting may be more advantageous for operational commanders to satisfy the basic principles that constitute successful coalition operations than for land-based commanders. For example, Joint Pub 3-07.3 (*Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Peacekeeping Operations*,) lists eight conditions for success in peacekeeping operations that seem more easily satisfied from a maritime perspective than not.[18] Additionally, Bockman, Coombs and Forsyth also support the position that the prerequisites for multinational peacekeeping success are more easily achieved in a maritime context.[19]

* *Integration of noncombatants:* this observation incorporates lessons one, two and four, and emerged as a key consideration when a JTF is used in peace operations. As *Peacekeeping*

Perspectives notes: "Military elements and NGOs often face different legal and political constraints. Sovereignty is a primary consideration for military officers planning to intervene, but for NGOs, it is secondary to their humanitarian goals."[20] Additionally, the question of identifying who the operation should be turned over when the military phase terminates is another consistent theme in the majority of JTF operations.

* *Risk management*: the United States is not the only country concerned about military casualties during JTF operations, however unwillingness to share risks equally can have a divisive effect on an alliance or coalition as the United States has discovered in the Balkans. Risk sharing has a strong bonding effect on multinational task forces. Risk management at the operational level seeks, in leveling the playing field, to preclude the perception that no single nation bears an unequal risk to its forces. If a CJTF commander properly manages risk to his assigned forces, he may significantly enhance the integrity of his command. The maritime environment may offer an easy solution to this as Admiral Bathurst, RN, (CINCFLEET) observed: "Maritime platforms have as much, perhaps more, flexibility than any other platform in managing operational risk."[21]

* *NATO's political realities:* the bottom line, perhaps is that, unlike a tailored American JTF, a NATO CJTF can "consist only of capabilities volunteered by the member nations--a coalition of the willing, sanctioned by the collective organization."[22]

CONCLUSIONS

Principal Conclusions

* The CJTF HQ concept appears to address three of the four key U.S. JTF lessons learned which are: cooperation considerations, need for a humanitarian doctrine, and capability for rapid response. It does not, however, adequately address the issue of JTF termination which has become, in the U.S. experience, an essential element of mission planning by JTF commanders..

* Conditions for success in peace operations appear to be more easily achievable in a maritime environment for a number of reasons. First, the "core competencies" necessary to deploy and sustain maritime units (i.e., C3I, tactical logistics support, etc.) predicates a level of sophistication that by definition would tend to exclude nations without that capability. However, the counterpoint to this argument is that this approach might seem to favor maritime nations with advanced navies and could result in a narrower spectrum of participants involved in the naval component of the JTF. Second, sovereignty issues and territorial concerns that might constrain land-based operations can be largely ignored in a maritime environment operating in international waters. An additional advantage is that the maritime environment also brings with it greater freedom of movement and mobility. Third, the maritime environment lends itself to improved risk management, which although difficult to quantify, must surely enhance the

strength of a Combined Joint Task Force.

* A standing CJTF HQ (vice an *ad hoc* arrangement) provides NATO with distinct advantages that are not translatable to U.S. organized JTFs. The observation, made earlier, that NATO relies heavily on "capabilities volunteered by the member nations" should be kept uppermost in mind when discussing Alliance operations. In view of the strains that OOA operations places on the Alliance, permanently constituted mechanisms (such as the CJTF HQ) can continuously address, refine and integrate member nations' particular concerns into the Alliance's OOA strategy.

Implications

For the operational commander a properly constituted maritime CJTF can arrive on-scene with real and immediate military potential. While the concept of a standing CJTF HQ seems to address political-military obstacles (interoperability, ROE, etc.) that sometimes characterize NATO operations, the pursuit of interoperability should not become a holy grail for the CJTF commander as "complete interoperability is always one of the dreams of a multinational force commander, but it is a difficult concept to achieve. NATO. . . has not achieved total interoperabiltity in its armed forces."[23]

Conducting CJTF operations from either a maritime-based HQ, or conducting CJTF operations at sea, may offer the best chance of success during the early phases of the CJTF

concept as it continues to develop.

NOTES

1. Charles L. Barry, "NATO's Bold New Concept: CJTF," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Summer 1994, p. 47.

2. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The Combined Joint Task Force Headquarters Concept*, (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1994), p. 2.

3. David E. Frost, quoted in Thomas C. Linn, "The Cutting Edge of Unified Actions," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 1993-94, p. 34.

4. Paul D. Miller, *Retaining Alliance Relevancy: NATO and the Combined Joint Task Force Concept*, National Security Paper No. 13, (Hollis, NH: Puritan Press, 1994), p. 37.

5. Douglas T. Stuart, "NATO after Operation Desert Storm: New Roles for NATO Forces?" in Jane's NATO Handbook, 1991-1992, ed. Bruce George, 211-214. London, UK: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1992, p. 211.

6. Willem Van Eekelen quoted in Stuart, "NATO after Operation Desert Storm: New Roles for NATO Forces?" p. 212.

7. Roland Dumas quoted in Stuart, "NATO after Operation Desert Storm: New Roles for NATO Forces?" p. 214.

8. Peter Saracino, "ARRC at the Sharp End: NATO's Rapid-Reaction Emergency Service,' *International Defense Review*, May 1994, p. 33.

9. Stewart and others, *JTF Operations Since 1983*, (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1994), pp. 9-18.

10. U.S. Dept. of State, *Peacekeeping Perspectives*, 7 July 1994, p. 13.

11. Jeremy J. Blackham, " Maritime Peacekeeping," *RUSI Journal*, August 1993, p. 22.

12. Thomas C. Linn, "The Cutting edge of Unified actions," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 1993-94, p. 37.

13. NATO document, p. 2.

14. Ibid. pp. 4,7,13.

15. Miller, *Retaining Alliance Relevance*, p. 13.

16. Mike Wells, "Seapower Conference Examines Next Decade," *Navy International*, May June 1994, p. 151.

17. Sharon Hobson and Joris J. Lok, "NATO feels the benefit of NACCIS," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 February 1995, p. 28.

18. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Peacekeeping Operations*. JOINT PUB 3-07.3. Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1994, p. II-6. These conditions for success are as follows: (1) consent/cooperation of parties in the conflict; (2) international support of the PKO (i.e., legitimacy); (3) a realistic and specified mandate with clearly understood ROE; (4) freedom of movement; (5) an effective C4 system; (6) well-trained, balanced, and impartial forces; (7) all-source intelligence gathering capability; finally, (8) an effective logistics system.

19. Larry J. Bockman, Barry L. Coombs and Andrew W. Forsyth, *The Employment of Maritime Forces in Support of United Nations Resolutions*. Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 1993, p. 64. The authors summarize the key advantages of maritime command and control as: (1) maritime C2 tends to reflect state-of-the-art technology; (2) highly portable; (3) capable of operations in international waters (i.e., reduces sovereignty issue for sensitive coalition partners); (4) carries minimal risk; and (5) capable of sustainment over long periods of time.

20. U.S. Dept. of State, *Peacekeeping Perspectives*, 21 July 1994, p. 11.

21. Wells, p. 151.

22. Miller, p. 52. See also Douglas C. Craft, *An Operational Analysis of the Persian Gulf War*, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1992, pp. 43-44.

23. Bockman et al., p. 68.

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